

Commission News



An Update to the Commissioners of the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission

Full Commission Meeting May 18, Sutton, MA

COMMISSION CONGRESSIONAL EFFORTS CONTINUE

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 31, 2006

The Honorable Conrad Burns
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Byron L. Dorgan
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Burns and Ranking Member Dorgan:

We write to thank you for your strong annual support for the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. As the Subcommittee proceeds with consideration of the Fiscal Year 2007 Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we are urging you to provide \$2.32 million in funding to allow the important work currently underway in the Corridor to proceed.

Established in 1986, the Blackstone Heritage Corridor recognizes the national and historical significance of the Blackstone region as the birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution. At the time of its inception, the Blackstone Corridor represented an entirely new approach for the National Park Service (NPS). Traditionally, Congress would have recognized the nationally significant resources of the Blackstone Valley by designating the area as a unit of the National Park System. However, the Blackstone Corridor's success can be attributed to the fact that the federal government does not own land in the region. Spanning across two states and encompassing twenty-four communities and half a million people, the Corridor represents a unique partnership between the NPS, the States of Rhode Island and Massachusetts, and the local communities.

Charged with overseeing the Corridor, federally-appointed state and local representatives form the Blackstone Corridor Commission and work with the NPS to carry out the mission of preserving and interpreting the unique resources and qualities of the Blackstone Valley. Over the length of the Commission's tenure, strong partnerships with local governments, private investors, and community stakeholders have been formed, and over \$300 million in private investments for heritage-related projects has entered the local economy. The success of the Corridor can be attributed to the dedication and hard work of the Corridor Commission in bringing communities together to realize the common goals of revitalized communities, historic and economic

restoration, and an improved environment. All this has been accomplished with a relatively small amount of federal funding that has been leveraged many times over by state, local, and private sector dollars.

The Commission and its Heritage Partners have worked to transform this once neglected river system into a vibrant heritage area. Today, visible signs of change are evident throughout the Blackstone Corridor: cities and towns have rediscovered their river communities, and a sense of ownership and pride has returned to the region. During 2005, several exciting riverfront projects moved forward in the Corridor, including the successful conversion of an empty 1840 mill complex into luxury apartments, a feasibility and engineering study for a Northern Gateway Visitor Center in Worcester, Massachusetts, and the continued evolution of the Blackstone River Bikeway, with seven continuous miles completed in Lincoln and Cumberland, Rhode Island.

These recent achievements underscore the continued need for the Corridor Commission and NPS to remain strong partners in the region. As you may know, however, we have reached a critical point in the Blackstone Corridor's history, and we are working hard to overcome two important challenges. First, the ten-year extension of the authorization for the Corridor expires this year, and the enactment of a reauthorization bill during this session of Congress is a top priority for the Rhode Island and Massachusetts delegations. Second, the President's FY07 budget included a proposal to merge federal appropriations for all 27 heritage areas into a Historic Preservation Fund, along with the State Historic Preservation Offices, the Save America's Treasures program, and other programs. We strongly oppose this idea. We are deeply concerned that this step would threaten the financial viability of the heritage areas, and stress that the mission of Blackstone Corridor is far broader than historic preservation, encompassing natural resources protection and restoration, public education and recreation, and economic development.

While we work with the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the Senate and House authorizing committees toward the goal of reauthorization of the Blackstone Corridor, we urge the Subcommittee to restore funding for the Corridor's Commission Operations account to a total of \$1 million. This would reinstate the necessary funding for staff support and implementation of the Corridor's 10-year Cultural Heritage and Land Management Plan.

Likewise, we request \$320,000 for the Blackstone Corridor's technical assistance account, which would enable the NPS staff to continue to provide

interpretive expertise in support of visitor center exhibits, the preservation of historic landscapes, and public school programs emphasizing local and regional history. In addition, the Blackstone Corridor's third account – the Development/Construction account – is critical for funding implementation of the Management Plan and driving the primary restoration activities in the Corridor, including: visitor center and museum development, preservation of the region's historic buildings, construction of the comprehensive river access network, and support for the Blackstone Bikeway and environmental restoration activities. Thanks to your strong support in FY06, the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act included \$450,000 for this account. We are requesting that the Subcommittee restore \$1 million to the Corridor's Development account in the FY07 Senate Interior Appropriations bill.

Many current and future challenges remain for the Commission and its partners as they work with local communities to complete ongoing regional projects, restore historical structures, and enhance the river environment. Strong federal funding will provide the resources necessary to preserve the beauty and cultural values of this nationally significant region. We look forward to working with you to protect and enhance the Blackstone Corridor and its heritage legacy.

Thank you for your kind consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

STAFF CONTACT – LARRY GALL

PRESERVE AMERICA GRANTS FOOTSTEPS IN HISTORY \$120,000 FOR PROGRAM EXPANSION

First Lady, Laura Bush, Awards Blackstone Valley Footsteps in History Grant



In the picture from right to left: RI Senator Lincoln Chafee; Secretary of the Interior Gail Norton; First Lady Laura Bush; Martha Wetzol, Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce; Robert Billington, President, Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. Washington, DC.

The grant presented to the Rhode Island Historical and Heritage Preservation Commission on behalf of the Preserve America communities in the Valley allows for expansion of the Blackstone River Valley *Footsteps in History Preserve America Weekend*, which was launched in October 2005. According to Bob Billington, *Footsteps in History* was created to invite visitors and residents to experience and enjoy the rich culture, arts and history of the 24 Preserve America communities within the Blackstone Valley. "Last year we had a one-weekend event, this year we will still offer a Columbus weekend event but will also explore the possibility of 24 events in our 24-town Corridor. "With the help from the White House Preserve America grant, we will be able to achieve our sustainable tourism development goals for the Blackstone Valley", Billington noted. *Footsteps* was one of 45 such awards presented to heritage tourism programs throughout the country.

The event, held in the Caucus Room of the Cannon House Office Building on Capitol Hill, was hosted by the Congressional Historic Preservation Caucus. The application for funding was developed in cooperation with the Rhode Island Historic Preservation & Heritage Commission, the Massachusetts Historical Commission and the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley Heritage Corridor Commission. The Tourism Collaborative created the *Footsteps in History* program as a means to bring history and tourism partners closer together as an industry in the Blackstone River Valley.

The Department of the Interior and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation are two of the Federal agencies that partner with the White House on the *Preserve America* initiative. *Preserve America* is a White House initiative that encourages and supports community efforts to preserve and enjoy our cultural and natural heritage. The goals of the initiative include a greater shared knowledge about the nation's past, strengthened regional

identities and local pride, increased local participation in preserving the country's cultural and natural heritage assets, and support for the economic vitality of our communities. For more information on the Preserve America program visit www.achp.org. STAFF CONTACT - HALFORD WELCH.

VOLUNTEERS IN PARKS PROGRAM (VIP)

Riendeau Named Northeast Region Volunteer of the Year!

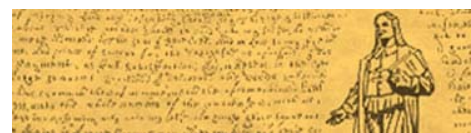


Caption, Fran Mainella, Director of the National Park Service. Julie Riendeau & Mary Bomar, Director of Northeast Region

Julie Riendeau of Uxbridge, Massachusetts was awarded the Volunteer of the Year Award for the Northeast Region of the National Park Service at the Northeast Region Superintendents' Conference on Thursday, April 20, 2006, in Washington, DC. She was recognized for her outstanding volunteer contributions as a Volunteer-in-Parks (VIP) with the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor.

"Ms. Riendeau volunteers to help others enjoy the Blackstone River Valley at every opportunity presented to her," explained Larry Gall, Acting Executive Director of the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. "From winter animal tracking programs to coordinating volunteers trying to combat invasive water chestnut plants clogging waterways, to championing the recreational opportunities the Paddle Club offers those seeking to explore the blue ways of the Blackstone River, Julie Riendeau personifies the volunteer who goes the extra mile to make others comfortable as they experience new challenges and explore new concepts in our very special National Heritage Corridor." Congratulations Julie and many thanks for all your volunteer time. STAFF CONTACT - SUZANNE BUCHANAN.

VIP's Kick off a Great New Adventure!



The Volunteer in Parks program and Roger Williams National Memorial will be kicking off a new program for youth between the ages of 12 to 16. *Adventures in History* was conceived as a hands on history summer workshop for youth with an expressed interest in history. *Adventures* will take place on the weeks beginning June 26 and July 31. Up to 20 participants will be selected for each class. *Adventurers* shall provide teacher

references and an essay in order to be selected for the program. Over the course of the week, participants shall experience a number of historic sites within walking or "rowing" distance of the Memorial and will be expected by the end of the week to make a brief interpretive presentation. Adventurers will be automatically signed up as VIP's and will be available throughout the year to help with other interpretive programming. Project partners include Providence Preservation Society, the Rhode Island Historical Society, First Baptist Church in America, Roger Williams National Memorial and the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. STAFF CONTACT - SUZANNE BUCHANAN AND HALFORD WELCH.

Chafee Award Winners Announced



From Left to Right: Alexander Thompson, Nora Schachte, Jon Scanlon and Daniel and Elaine Malloy.

Four Blackstone Valley residents were named recipients of the John H. Chafee Heritage Award established by the Corridor Commission to honor the late Senator John Chafee's legacy. The Corridor Commission annually seeks nominations for those who exemplify active involvement in projects, programs, and institutions promoting the cultural heritage, natural preservation, and/or the quality of life in the Blackstone River Valley.

The Massachusetts awardees were: Husband and wife **Daniel and Elaine Malloy** of Hopedale recognized for their tireless efforts to preserve and share the rich history of Hopedale; and **Alexander Thompson** of Uxbridge a student at Northbridge High School who is recognized for his tireless commitment to the Mumford River from organizing clean ups to water quality monitoring and testing.

Rhode Island awardees were: **John Scanlon** of Lincoln for his efforts surrounding the preservation and promotion of the historic and beautiful Hearthside, and **Nora Schachte** of Woonsocket, a senior at Woonsocket High School currently serving as President of the after school River Club where she has been a member for five years working to organize and mentor other students about the Blackstone River's importance in their lives.

Two additional awards were given in recognition of the partnerships and community spirit that have contributed to the Corridor Commission's strategy to revitalize the historic, cultural and natural aspects of the Blackstone River Valley.

2006 Partnership Award

The **Massachusetts Highway Department** received the Corridor's 2006 Partnership Award recognized for its leadership, exemplary service and the tremendous progress it has achieved towards completing the Blackstone River Bikeway. Last June saw the opening of the first 2.5 miles of Bikeway located within the Rt. 146/Mass Turnpike interchange project of the 48-mile alternative transportation facility that will ultimately connect New England's second and third largest cities -- Providence, Rhode Island and Worcester, Massachusetts. The planning and development of the Bikeway has required the assistance of over 30 different partners including four federal agencies, five state agencies, eight municipalities, the Providence & Worcester Railroad and a host of private and non-profit groups.

2006 Community Stewardship Award

Orville R. Harrold, President, Providence & Worcester Railroad was posthumously awarded the 2006 Community Stewardship Award in recognition of his unfailing commitment to making the Worcester community a better place in which to live. From recognizing the potential of the city's old mill buildings and renovating the former Wright Wire Mill on Hammond Street into P&W's headquarters to championing Worcester businesses as the Chair of the Worcester Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, Harrold's leadership influenced the planning of the Worcester Visitor Center, the planning of the Blackstone Gateway Park, the construction of the Blackstone River Bikeway and the preservation of the Blackstone Canal. For more information, visit www.nps.gov/blac. STAFF CONTACT – THOMAS ROSS.

HERITAGE AND PRESERVATION

Alternatives Breaks Ground

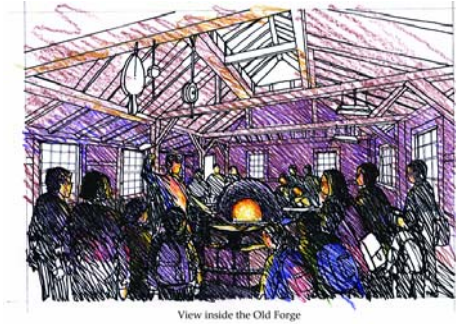


Architects Model of the Renovated Alternatives Complex.

The Board of Alternatives broke ground Friday, May 11 on the revitalization of the mill complex along the Mumford River in Whitinsville. Over 100 friends of Alternatives were present to participate in the \$5 million renovation. The Heritage Corridor provided seed monies for a project feasibility study as well as an historic structures report. The project architect is Austin Architects of Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The facility will host multiple uses including administration, a forge, restaurant space, theater and community space, housing

and a renovation which will see the mill complex turned into a multiuse facility for the community, utilizing green technology. "We're very excited," states Alternatives executive director Dennis Rice, "to begin the renovation of the Mill into an inclusive community treasure." STAFF CONTACT - HALFORD WELCH. (From LBV Web and Other Sources).



View inside the Old Forge

View by Austin Architects of the renovated 1772 Whitin Forge, Whitinsville, MA.

New Blackstone Visitor Center



The New Blackstone River State Park Visitor Center on Rt. 295 in RI. Lincoln, MA.

A new visitor center opened in the Blackstone Valley on January 9 on Route 295 North in Lincoln, Rhode Island. The visitor center is located immediately adjacent to the Blackstone Valley State Park and will also have access to the Blackstone River Bikeway. Rhode Island Governor Carcieri and numerous other federal and local officials welcomed the new addition to the visitor center network. The visitor center has been constructed by the cooperative efforts of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management the Rhode Island Department of Transportation and Federal Highway. The center hosts a mix of uses in addition to the visitor center operation and is being operated by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council (BVTC). Thanks to Mark Jewell for assisting with the exhibits and Kevin Klyberg for assisting with the text. The BVTC is also seeking volunteers to assist in staffing. For more information, contact the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council or visit tourblackstone.com.

Blackstone Canal Fever Grips the Valley!

With two CanalFests scheduled for this summer and the final negotiations rapidly moving ahead for the Rhode Island Blackstone Canal Preservation Study, it seems that 2006 could be the Year of the Blackstone Canal.

The Corridor Commission is partnering with the Rhode Island Department of Transportation to complete a Blackstone Canal

Preservation Study for Rhode Island. The goal is to thoroughly identify the route of the Canal and the location of associated features, and develop a set of recommendations regarding protection, stabilization, restoration and public access for selected canal segments. We anticipate a late May to early June kick-off for this project.



Canal Fest Bicycle Ride.

Once you have discovered the Blackstone Canal, let's celebrate it! And that's just what is happening all along the Blackstone Canal this summer. On Saturday, June 3rd with the Blackstone River & Canal Heritage State Park acting as host, the annual National Trails Day CanalFest will be held. Events will be taking place all day at the park starting at 10:00 AM, and special Ranger-led Canal tours will take place throughout the Blackstone Valley.

- 10:00 AM – A Bike Tour along the Blackstone Canal on the Bikeway in Rhode Island starting at the Village of Ashton and pedaling north to Manville and back – led by Ranger Kevin Klyberg.
- 11:00 AM – A Walking Tour in the Blackstone River & Canal Heritage State Park from the Stanley Woolen Mill parking lot north to the Spillway – led by Ranger Dan Wegner.
- 1:00 PM – A South Uxbridge Walking Tour, starting at Rt. 122 by the Blackstone River, will take visitors along the proposed Bikeway section and Uncover the Hidden Blackstone Canal – led by Ranger Chuck Arning.
- 2:00 PM – A Walking Tour to Millville Lock – led by NPS Volunteer Steve Giardini.
- 3:00 PM – A Walking Tour through the woods to the Goat Hill Lock – led by Ranger Peter Coffin.

Then make sure you circle the date of **Saturday, September 9** where **Worcester** will hold its **Blackstone Canal Festival & "FreeTheBlackstone" Short Film Festival & Competition**. Of great excitement is the proposal to put 75 yards of water back on Harding Street, the route of the original Canal. Imagine sitting along the original canal route and sipping beverages right next to a watered section of the Blackstone Canal in a major urban downtown! Truly a highlight of the day! Then in the evening, the first **"FreeTheBlackstone Short Film Festival & Competition"** will be held, where new independent films from around the country will be viewed for the very first time. It will be a juried Film Festival open only to films that feature the Blackstone Canal as a character. You don't want to miss this tremendous film experience! Sundance here we come! STAFF CONTACT - CHUCK ARNING.

South Grafton Vision Plan

There is much excitement in South Grafton with work commencing to cap the Fisherville Mill site and efforts on a vision plan moving forward. During the winter 2005-06 Dodson Associates of Ashfield, Massachusetts was selected through a competitive process and contracted to further vision work and explore land use recommendations for the South Grafton Community. Dodson has held two well attended public workshops on the project and is in the process of finalizing more specific plans for the community. After data assessment was completed this spring, conceptual land use diagrams have been presented identifying several systems (pedestrian, canal, bikeway, river), nodes (village centers), and open space connections. These will be blended into a master plan which takes full advantage of all the opportunities in the area. In addition to these efforts moving forward, additional work was contracted by Grafton to explore the Fisherville site itself and how it may best take advantage of specific access, interpretive and open space opportunities. Work on the project is expected to be completed prior to the fall. STAFF CONTACT - HALFORD WELCH.

Blackstone Canal Preservation Takes a Major Step Forward at Fisherville, South Grafton



The Blackstone Canal Preservation Study – MA.

completed in September, 2005, created a lot of excitement in the Valley. With specific recommendations about where to focus preservation efforts, local communities began looking at the Canal in a whole new light. Things are moving quickly at the Fisherville Mill site in Grafton, which includes a segment of the Canal and the apparent remains of Lock #30. The Grafton Land Trust, the Grafton Historical Commission, developer Eugene Bernat of Cover Technologies and the Heritage Corridor have come together to complete an Historic Structures Report for these significant canal features. On May 3, a project kick-off event was held, and included a site visit with the Public Archaeology Laboratory, who have been contracted to do the work. We anticipate that the Historic Structures Report for the Fisherville Mill Canal & Lock #30 Site will be completed by the end of the summer. STAFF CONTACT - CHUCK ARNING OR JOANNA DOHERTY.



Fisherville Mill Site Canal Remnants, Grafton, MA

Groups Move to Protect Franklin Farm, Cumberland, RI



Franklin Farm, Cumberland, RI

The Town of Cumberland received a matching grant from the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission for the preparation of a National Register nomination for Franklin Farm. Located on Abbott Run Valley Road, the property includes a 19th-century house and barn complex as well as over 50 acres of fields. It is a rare surviving example of a Rhode Island dairy farm and provides much-needed open space in an area that is experiencing strong development pressure. The Corridor Commission has committed \$5,000 to assist the Town of Cumberland in the preparation of a Master Plan for Franklin Farm, which will include recommendations regarding the rehabilitation and use of the property. It is anticipated that the Master Plan will be underway soon, roughly concurrent with the National Register nomination. STAFF CONTACT - JOANNA DOHERTY

RIVERWAYS

Greenway Challenge Supports Youth Leadership Academy



Greenway Challenge representatives present a check to the Blackstone Valley Youth Leadership Academy, a project of the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce Education Foundation. Sutton, MA.

The Greenway Challenge presented a check for \$1000 to the Blackstone Valley Youth Leadership Academy on January 10, 2006. The Academy develops the leadership skills of 9th and 10th grade students from Blackstone Valley communities in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, and strengthens their connection to the Valley through community service. The presentation was made at the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce economic outlook breakfast held at Pleasant Valley Country Club in Sutton, Massachusetts. "The Academy students are tomorrow's leaders," says program director, Mary Lou Anderson. "They are committed to preserving the watershed. We are grateful for the support of the Greenway Challenge."

The full mission of the Greenway Challenge is to promote the recreational quality of life in the Blackstone Valley through support for clean water campaigns, projects to further develop access to waterways, projects to develop hiking and biking trails, wildlife projects, and environmental education. For more information visit www.greenwaychallenge.org. STAFF CONTACT - BARBARA DIXON. (Excerpted from the Greenway Challenge Website).

Mark Your Calendars for the September 30, 2006 Greenway Challenge



Get ready for the sixth annual *Greenway Challenge*. The committee is already up and running and getting ready for one of the most challenging challenges ever!

Last year's field invited new categories and enhanced participation by over 500 participants (and over 1000 onlookers) who enjoyed beautiful sunshine at the finish line along the river in Lincoln, Rhode Island.

This year's logistics committee members are working on delivering a new and more challenging race.

The *Greenway Challenge* is a project of the *Blackstone River Valley Corridor Keepers* - dedicated to preserving the heritage and culture of the region. For more information on the evolving details visit greenwaychallenge.org. STAFF CONTACT - BARBARA DIXON.

River Tour Maps Available

Seven Blackstone River and Canal River Tours have been developed for paddling the Blackstone River. Tours will be made available to the public on the web and through Visitor Centers and river recreation businesses throughout the Blackstone Valley. The tours are divided by skill into Beginning and Intermediate levels and each one provide paddlers with information to plan a safe and interesting trip on the Blackstone River. Currently, there are four tours in Massachusetts and three tours in Rhode Island with more tours planned for future development. The tours are available for download from the Corridor website (www.nps.gov/blac.home.htm) and from the Blackstone River Coalition website (www.zaptheblackstone.org). STAFF CONTACT - DIANE WENDLAND.

River Access News

Working in partnership with the Blackstone River Watershed Association and the MASS Department of Conservation and Recreation the Commission has completed the design of nine river access sites in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Heritage Design Group has worked as a consultant on the project and will continue to develop four more sites over the next year. Environmental permitting has been completed for the five sites in Massachusetts, including improvements to the Blackstone Gorge Overlook in Blackstone, MA. Staff will continue to work with MASS DCR to move forward with construction on the access sites located on property within the Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park and complete permitting for four more sites over the next year. In Rhode Island, four sites have been designed in partnership with the Blackstone River Watershed Council. Environmental permitting for the sites in Rhode Island and the design of three more sites will be completed over the next year. Once sites are designed and permitted staff will work with the watershed groups, volunteers and state agencies to construct the access sites. STAFF CONTACT - DIANE WENDLAND

BRWA volunteers under the direction of Jim Plasse and Rosemary Longo recently worked with Riverdale Mills to clear a portage around the Riverdale Dam. The portage was completed on April 15 and the Corridor has provided signs directing people to use the new portage in time for the 30th Annual BRWA River Race held on May 13, 2006.



Volunteers Clearing for Portage



Portage Signs Being Installed.

The development of Woonsocket River Landing took a big step forward this Spring when the City of Woonsocket secured a public easement from the private landowner at the site of the landing. Plans are currently under environmental permitting review with RIDEM Wetlands. Once environmental permitting is completed, the City of Woonsocket will move the project into construction using \$390,000 in Transportation Enhancement funding from RI Department of Transportation. The Corridor Commission has provided technical support and \$50,000 in design and permitting funding to leverage the Enhancement funding.



Proposed Woonsocket River Landing. Woonsocket, RI.

Manville River Landing is currently under environmental permitting review and will be ready for construction by the Town of Cumberland once permitting is completed. The Manville project is leveraging \$40,000 in Commission funding in addition to technical assistance to use \$390,000 in RIDOT Transportation Enhancement funding for construction. STAFF CONTACT - DIANE WENDLAND.

Pawtucket Riverfront Development



Illustration of Pawtucket Riverfront, RI.

Last March the City of Pawtucket held a public meeting to discuss options for the development of the waterfront area between the

State Pier and the Division Street Bridge and the Town Landing area across the river. With some funding from the Corridor Commission, the City has been working with Pare Engineering Corp and Gates, Leighton and Associates to develop recommendations for using the useable public areas along the waterfront.

Ideas for recreational and commercial uses, physical and visual connections, parking, and links to the surrounding neighborhoods are all being incorporated into conceptual designs for further development and planning. STAFF CONTACT - DIANE WENDLAND.

Riverwalk in Downtown Pascoag

Plans for the design of a ½-mile length of the Riverwalk along the Clear River in historic downtown Pascoag have been completed through a partnership between the Corridor and the Town of Burrillville. Complementing work recently completed on a River Park in downtown Pascoag, the Riverwalk will provide public access to the Clear River and contribute to the revitalization of the downtown Pascoag area. The property of the proposed Riverwalk winds through Burrillville's retail core, once the center of vibrant commercial and industrial activity. Pascoag is an historic village in the Town of Burrillville with areas of historic mill buildings and associated resources that have been anchors in the development of the village and the Town. This Riverwalk will help to facilitate the development of the "Downtown Pascoag Action Plan" for revitalizing the downtown area. Important stakeholders in this project have already been included in the development of the Plan and have shown their support for completing its construction. The improvement of the Village for public use will benefit not only local residents but also visitors to the region and will contribute to river recovery and environmental education efforts along the Clear River, a tributary of the Blackstone. STAFF CONTACT - DIANE WENDLAND

BLACKSTONE VALLEY INSTITUTE

Leadership Blackstone Valley Completes Another Successful Year



Participants from the Current LBV Class.

The 2005-06 Class of *Leadership Blackstone Valley* is coming to a close. Nineteen participants have been guided through the Blackstone and have learned about different organizations and opportunities that make the region great. Graduation takes place at Thursday, May 25 at Slater Mill.

With this graduating class there are now 107 alumni in the region. Beckley Gaudette, director of the program, reports that on a recent survey of alumni, all but one reported that the class was beneficial to them, with the majority reporting that it had a significant impact on their approach to leadership. Eighty-two percent indicated that they still use the network of people they met in the class. And, when asked to compare their level of community involvement from before they took the class to the present, the number of alumni at the highest level more than doubled.

LBV is a collaborative effort between the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce Education Foundation, the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor and the Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce, with additional funding from the Rhode Island Foundation. The total cost for the program is \$800.00. Participants are asked to participate in class costs with a sponsor and/or organization sponsor paying the balance. Limited scholarships are available. STAFF CONTACT – HALFORD WELCH.

Four Towns Set a Benchmark and Begin Work on a Collective Plan

The Four Towns project is a regional model of cooperation. Two years ago representatives began meeting to discuss the opportunities that exist between the areas shared by the communities located along the Route 146 corridor between Main Street in Whitinsville and Douglas Road. The study area encompasses around 1700 acres and is suitable for all types of new development. This area also shares the boundaries of four towns making zoning approvals and reuse of these properties difficult to coordinate. The group has been meeting under the guidance of a steering committee composed of selectmen and staff from the towns. Each town has set aside \$5,000 which has been matched by the Heritage Corridor, to the tune of \$5000. This money has allowed the committee to pursue a collaborative planning effort for this site. Daylor and Associates of Braintree, Massachusetts was selected as the consultant and is in the research phase of the project. The project will ultimately provide the groundwork for discussion of land use, shared systems, environmental preservation, and other issues important to the communities. Recommendations on shared management structure for the project are also anticipated in the final report. STAFF CONTACT – HALFORD WELCH.

TOURISM

History in Hospitality

On May 23 at Roger Williams National Memorial the first ***History in Hospitality*** will be held. The event has been planned to be a pre-season open house of opportunities available to the hospitality industry for visitors this season. All invitees are encouraged to bring and share information about a specific site or summer program. Over 100 invitations have been issued to historic sites, hotels and other groups throughout Providence and

the Blackstone Valley. Groups will hear presenters from the industry and will experience the planting of the 2006 Native American Garden, collaboration with Plimoth Plantation. For attending, participants will receive a historic reproduction mug from the site and be able to take home a real heritage plant for their own gardens. A tasting of real succotash may be offered as part of the program! Slots for participation are open. STAFF CONTACT - BARBARA DIXON.

Things in Common

On July 27, the Heritage Corridor will be hosting another tourism event, Things in Common. Things in Common has been designed as a networking opportunity for the Heritage Corridor with the tourism community in the northern part of the corridor. For more information or to attend the event, please contact the Heritage Corridor. STAFF CONTACT - BARBARA DIXON.

Providence Warwick Convention and Visitor Bureau Partners with the Corridor

The Providence and Warwick Convention and Visitor Bureau developed a new National Park Poster to be displayed in the convention center lobby. Design assistance was completely provided by the CVB for the poster which depicts National Park sites throughout Rhode Island. Images from Touro Synagogue, a National Historic Site, Roger Williams and the Blackstone Heritage Corridor welcome visitors to Providence and the state. Many thanks to the CVB for making this a reality. STAFF CONTACT – BARBARA DIXON.

INTERPRETATION

Certified Interpretive Guide Training Exceed Expectations

Where can you find a Certified Interpretive Trainer who is excited about a group after four intensive days of training? At the Historic Hearthside Homestead (circa 1810) in Lincoln, Rhode Island in the heart of the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, that's where! As the last of the group were about to give their final presentations the afternoon of May 12, 2006, Concord, Massachusetts-based trainer Sarah Blodgett said that the 15 participants "exceeded expectations" during the 32 hours of work required to become a Certified Interpretive Guide.

Most of the ten training sessions she has conducted in the past have been for staff-based sites. In this case, the majority of trainees were volunteers who put in a full day and then returned home with more work to prepare for the next day. "This has been my favorite group ever," she offered. "There is so much spirit, the volunteers are incredibly enthusiastic and dedicated and they have all had to 'stretch' to make this work for them. But they have all been very supportive of each other."

National Park Service Ranger Suzanne Buchanan coordinated a grant through Rhode Island's Department of Environmental

Management offering the training to volunteers who were already active as Volunteers in Parks through a national program. The newly Certified Interpretive Guides will be going a step further to assist sites throughout the bi-state National Heritage Corridor as they deal with more visitors inquiring into the long and varied history of the Birthplace of America's Industrial Revolution. Blodgett said that the goal of each guide is ultimately to "encourage visitors to be community stewards of the site they are visiting" and it looks like they are well on their way to doing just that!



Interpretive Training at Hearthsides House in Lincoln, Rhode Island.

Blackstone Valley Graduate Course Nears End of Semester

The first offering of the Graduate course Teaching the American Story through the Blackstone Valley is about to come to a close. The course, offered by the Massachusetts Audubon Society in partnership with the Corridor Commission, is designed to introduce teachers to some of the educational programs available in the Blackstone River Valley. Since February, a group of eight teachers have been visiting sites across the Blackstone Valley each week to learn about their educational offerings, participate in selected activities, and discover how to incorporate them into their classroom.

This is a great opportunity for teachers to discover some of the educational programs available in the Blackstone River Valley," said Ranger Kevin Klyberg. "Our partners across the valley have wonderful primary resources that can not be found anywhere else, and they give students the chance to come in contact with 'the real thing,' not just to see something on television or the internet. These sessions will give educators some new tools for teaching outside the boundaries of a classroom and a textbook." The course continues through the end of May.



Image caption: The Blackstone Valley Graduate Course visited Great Road on April 1. Here George Christie from the Eleazer Arnold House demonstrates a simple weaving activity to the students.

New England Training Institute and Exposition, Newport

Ranger Dan Wegner and Outdoor Recreation Planner Mark Jewell gave an educational presentation to the New England Training Institute and Exposition April 3, 2006 in Newport, Rhode Island. Their presentation "Enabling Recreation through Blueways, Bikeways, and Greenways" explained and illustrated using a Power Point program how recreation opportunities can be created using rivers, bike paths, and open space for both active and passive recreational activities. Examples were drawn from the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor and the partnerships that make these opportunities possible. The New England Training Institute and Exposition is sponsored by the National Recreation and Park Association, and brings together municipal park and recreation directors, supervisors, planners, non-profits and other agencies from the private sector throughout New England for training for which they may receive continuing education credits to apply toward professional certification. STAFF CONTACT - DAN WEGNER.

Rangers Offer Walkabouts in 2006

The 2006 Thursday Night Walkabout series kicks off on June 1 with a tour of Harrisville, which is also a part of the Corridor Commission's contribution to Burrillville's Bicentennial celebration. New Ranger tours to be offered this year include Daniel's Farm, Franklin Farm and a walk of East Douglas. Another new twist to this year's schedule is that several of the VIPs who took the Certified Interpretive Guide training are developing new tours that they will debut as Walkabouts. All of the Walkabout programs are free and begin at 6:30 PM. For more information and a full schedule of walks, please see the

Heritage Corridor website. STAFF CONTACT – KEVIN KLYBERG.

Paddle Club



Paddle Club Volunteers Get Recognized.

Volunteer Center of Rhode Island recognized the Blackstone Paddle Club volunteers for its 2005 outstanding volunteer program. Volunteers from the Paddle Club were on hand April 27, 2006 at the VCRI Annual Volunteer Award reception. In recognition of exceptional volunteer efforts and continued support of the community with the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. This award recognized Paddle Club volunteer's dedication to volunteer service and signifies they have served the Blackstone River communities with distinction. We thank you for your dedication to the river and extend our sincere appreciation for all your efforts. Enjoy the 2006 paddling season.

Along the Blackstone

The Blackstone Trek Continues with Part III of Uncovering the Hidden Blackstone Canal - Along the Blackstone Show 63



Ranger Arning Guiding a Group Tour at Scull Rock Lock, MA.

Translating the 19th-century terrain of the Blackstone Canal to today's landscape is a real challenge. But with canal experts Rick Greenwood of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission and our own Ranger Kevin Klyberg interpreting the 1828 Phelps As-Built Map of the Canal while Ranger Chuck Arning walks the route, it becomes clear that much of the canal is still visible. **Part III of Uncovering the Hidden Blackstone Canal**, of the award-winning series "Along the Blackstone," takes us further on our journey. Picking up where

we left off in Millville, we travel upstream through Uxbridge and the Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park. Along the way, we learn just what a valuable preservation tool the Bikeway has become. Mark Jewell, National Park Service Recreation Planner takes us along the canal and the proposed Bikeway alignment in South Uxbridge by the Skull Rock Lock site. After walking by several significant canal sites, we meet Mass DCR Interpretive Ranger Val Stegemoen who tells us the history of the Canal through the State Park and the significance of the Widow Willard Bridge. We anticipate it will take two more episodes of "Along the Blackstone" to get us to the Canal Basin in downtown Worcester. So stay tuned.



Prospect Hill Cemetery, Uxbridge, MA

Currently in production is Show #64, "Preservation Passion," which looks at major preservation efforts in the Valley and the local groups with the passion to make preservation happen. We will visit the Reuben Mason House in Glocester, St. Ann's Church and its wonderful frescoes in Woonsocket, and a few more stops before we are done. Most importantly, we will meet the passionate folks with the vision to preserve these great sites. For further information about upcoming *Along the Blackstone* shows contact Ranger Chuck Arning. STAFF CONTACT – CHUCK ARNING.

CALENDAR OF COMMISSION ACTIVITIES

May 23, 2006. History in Hospitality. Roger Williams National Memorial. 10AM - 2:30 PM.

June 3. National Trails Day.

June 17. River's Day 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM Central Falls Landing, Central Falls, RI.

June 26. ROWI Adventures Begins.

July 27, Things in Common. Grafton Common.

July 31. ROWI Adventures Second Session.

September 9. Free The Blackstone Short Film Festival & Worcester CanalFest, Worcester, MA.

September 21, Full Commission Meeting, St. Anne's Arts and Cultural Center, Woonsocket, RI

September 30, Blackstone River Valley Greenway Challenge.

Fall 2006. Footsteps in History. Various Sites

November 3 & 4 - Blackstone Canal Symposium.

November 16. Full Commission Meeting, Broad Meadow Brook, Worcester, MA.